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More and more, public libraries are offering Internet access to their patrons in an effort to provide them with the most relevant and current resources available mainly through the World Wide Web. While a major proportion of the literature on this topic is concerned with funding, obstacles, successes, filtering, or policies, there is an absence of research which examines the difficult tasks that must be accomplished in order for a public library to offer Internet access to its users.

The purpose of this study is to observe the steps the Durham Public Library took so that the Library can offer Internet services to its patrons and to understand how this example may help other public libraries trying to offer similar services. Internet services is defined as having a public workstation at which patrons are able to send email, conduct searches, and download files all from the Internet.

Headings:

Internet - - Public Libraries

Public Libraries - - Case Studies

PROVIDING INTERNET ACCESS: ONE PUBLIC LIBRARY

by  
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## **Introduction**

Since public libraries began to appear across the nation, one of the purposes, if not the main purpose, has been to share and disseminate information with its community. Whether it is government information or recreational information, public libraries have tried to build collections that meet the needs of the patrons in their community. Of course this means that each library's collection varies from one another, with the exception of a few staples, the collections are being developed in order to provide the information that each library's community wants and needs. One of these exceptions is the Internet. Each public library needs to think about what the Internet can add to its collection, the issues involved with getting connected, and what is the best way to integrate Internet services into their public library.

The Internet has changed the way that many people look for and find information and communicate. Of course, if the way that information is communicated changes, than public libraries need to evaluate how this will effect the way they find and provide information to their patrons. As more and more information gets created solely in electronic format and distributed over the Internet, will public libraries be fulfilling their mission by not having access to the Internet?

Public libraries have a reputation for being a great equalizer in society. They provide information and resources that many people would not be able to access if their local public library did not provide it. Though a small minority of society does not have to rely on the public library because they can afford to provide themselves with the

information or resources they need, the average person has come to rely on the public library as the place to find information and resources on numerous topics.

Currently, terms like "information age" and "information superhighway" are in common usage in all areas of society, it is important to make sure that everyone has the opportunity to access the Internet and use the resources and information that it provides. As the learning curve continues to increase for those who have yet to be introduced to the Internet, it is necessary for public libraries to help people overcome the obstacles that stand in the way of being able to get on the "information superhighway" as soon as possible. Just as public libraries helped the average person become literate and informed at the turn of the century, today public libraries need to help the average person have access to information online and become Internet literate.

Most public libraries agree that it is important that they offer their patrons Internet access and services, but it also means devoting a lot of time and resources to another project. Public libraries face many challenges and issues when deciding to offer Internet access. Public libraries have a hard enough time managing and supporting the services they already offer and providing Internet services entail adding a lot more work to their already full plate. There are major funding, administrative, and policy issues that have to be figured out. Since public libraries are not being offered defined or strong support from the federal government, they are navigating this territory with the help of other libraries and drawing on the resources of their librarians in order to be able to offer Internet services to their patrons. Public librarians are using their professional skills to find the information, funding, and the partnerships needed to re-create the public library for the new millennium.

For public libraries that want to continue to be vital to their communities, they need to be able to offer their patrons the services they need to keep current with the world around them. As more and more information is available through the Internet and the Internet alone, the library has to include access to it as part of their collection and services. This means that for many public libraries they will need to re-structure many aspects of the library and change some of the ways information is thought about and provided. The Internet offers public libraries and librarians many challenges and they are going to have to be creative and flexible in order to overcome the challenges.

## **Literature Review**

Public libraries offer important services and resources to their communities. Patrons depend on their public library to provide them with information on numerous topics and aid them in their research. In turn the public library makes an effort to develop a collection of materials that can meet the needs of their patrons. The collection is continually weeded and developed to reflect the changing needs of a community and to offer the best resources that are available to libraries. The public library does this because of the commitment they have to insure that their patrons are able to access the information they need and also to maintain the library's reputation in the community as the place to go for information, help, and leisure.

In this information age, public librarians are working to keep their libraries in touch with current trends and up to date for their patrons. As the Internet continues to develop and to have an ever increasing impact on society, librarians began to have to decide whether it was important to offer Internet access to their patrons. Now, there are very few public librarians wondering whether Internet access should be part of the library's services, but how can the library offer Internet services as the number of public libraries that offer Internet access are continually increasing (Bertot & McClure, 1998). Public librarians are trying to figure out how to offer Internet services that will meet the needs of their users as well as the library and librarians.

There are many obstacles for public libraries and librarians who want to offer Internet services to their patrons. Different public libraries are overcoming these challenges in different ways. The literature on the "how" and "why" of public libraries

offering Internet services to patrons is abundant but weak. While many public librarians write short articles announcing that their library is online and a brief summary of why and how they accomplished this goal they do not expand on many key points. There are not many in depth looks at exactly what a public library did to offer Internet services. The literature is an excellent place for public librarians to see why public libraries offered Internet services and at least give a brief sketch of the different ways available to public libraries to be able to afford and accommodate Internet services. It also gives librarians a chance to see how varied the scope is among different public libraries involved in Internet projects. For example, some libraries have one terminal, which was donated, with dial-up access, while other have fifteen terminals and are part of a state network.

Nonetheless, the literature provides many reasons why public libraries decided to offer Internet service to their patrons. One of the reasons which appears most frequently is that public libraries have to continue to play the role of an equalizer. Many libraries feel that public libraries are obligated to help keep the gap between the information haves and have-nots as small as possible. Sutherland (1996) states that, "computer literacy and access to electronic information is as important today as literacy and books were when Andrew Carnegie funded the first of the public libraries." (p. 4). Though there is a lot of attention given to the Internet and the information age, it may be a little misleading because it does not reflect what sections of society are able and can afford to keep up in the information age. Fogarty and Misiewicz (1998) reports that, "only twenty-five percent of Americans have access to online information services at home, at school, or at work. Yet more and more information is becoming available only online through the Internet." (p. 37). Public libraries feel that they are the institution that can be the most



successful in introducing more and more people to the Internet and online services. As

McClure (1995) states:

Libraries belong in the vanguard of this moment, promoting network literacy and servicing as both a place of first resort (a community Internet resource center introducing new information technologies, demonstrating the uses of networking, providing Internet training, and promoting community collaborations) and a place of last resort, a safety net providing equal public access to all types of information through the Internet for the nation's citizens. (p. 80)

There is also a thread running throughout the literature that public libraries need to offer Internet services because of their dedication to providing government referrals and information to their patrons. Public libraries have always provided its patrons with government information and as the federal, state, and local governments begin to publish and provide more of its information only over the Internet, public libraries must still be able to provide government information. McClure, Bertot, and Beachboard (1996) reiterate and update this point by stating that, "the public library is the key point of contact and liaison for providing citizens with access to local, state, and federal electronic information and services." (p.234). When Mansfield (1997) discusses the mission of OPLIN, Ohio Public Library Information Network, she states that one of the reasons OPLIN was established was to provide, "access to federal, state, and regional information resources" (p. 44) in order to help all Ohio citizens have equal access to this type of information. Access to government information has always been important to public libraries and without Internet access they will not be able to maintain this as one of their services.

Another discussion in the literature revolves around how Internet services will benefit not just the patrons but the library itself. There are a few ways in which the library can benefit from adding these services to the standard services that they offer. Bertot and McClure (1997) found in their work with Pennsylvania public libraries that library directors felt that offering Internet workstations was beneficial because they allowed the library to expand the amount of reference resources, attract new users to the library, and expand to the scope of the library collection as a whole. A specific example of where new patrons were attracted is from Welling (1996) who states that the Stanly County Public Library in North Carolina, "attracted a new group of users; a study of the computer sign-up sheets indicates that we have scheduled people that have not used other library services." (p. 167).

Scully (1998) feels that the Internet alongside of the traditional collection will only increase the benefits that the community already receives from a good library collection. Scully (1998) states that Internet access gives libraries "a bigger pool of resources to select from, some of which are available in a number of formats, that is as books and electronically through the Internet." (p. 55). McClure, Bertot, and Beachboard (1996) discuss how Internet services allow public libraries to create new roles for themselves or expand their current roles. The authors (McClure, Bertot, & Beachboard, 1998) list a number of examples such as; network literacy center, global electronic information center, liaison for government information, center for electronic life-long learning, public access center, community information organizer and provider, and economic development center. Overall, the literature agrees that Internet access can improve the library's services by having greater access to more information and the

ability to, as Batt (1996) states, "develop services, which are much more specifically targeted at groups within the community." (p. 30).

Within the literature, the discussion about the main obstacles that public libraries and librarians face when considering offering Internet services to their patrons revolve around the lack of strong government support and the high costs associated with providing these kinds of services. Many librarians feel that the federal government needs to provide public libraries with a definite and clear plan of how public libraries are going to provide Internet services and how the federal government will help support these services. In their NCLIS study, McClure, Bertot, and Zweizig (1994) show that in general, public librarians consider it very important that the federal government provide public libraries with the basics-Internet connections and appropriate equipment.

The federal government has spoken about the necessity for universal access, so information haves and have-nots do not divide the nation. The government also has spoken about how public libraries can help bridge this gap by becoming part of the National Information Infrastructure, but the government has offered little clarification of how exactly this will occur. McClure, Bertot, and Zweizig (1994) state that:

In recent policy statements from Clinton administration as well as proposed congressional legislation, there is clear mention of the importance of connecting libraries to the Internet. There is no clear picture, however, of the role public libraries might serve in this networked environment or of the responsibility the federal government has in helping public libraries move into the networked environment. (p. 43)

In this NCLIS study the authors recommend "all stakeholders interested in accomplishing key public-sector policy goals outlined by the Clinton administrations in its various NII policy statements will need to rethink both federal and public library roles as the country evolves into a networked society." (McClure, Bertot, & Zweizig, 1994, p. 42). McClure

(1995) points out that because "the significant and complex role of the library has been left to evolve haphazardly, with inadequate direction and sadly limited resources in a poorly defined federal policy environment" (p. 81), public libraries can not offer Internet services to their patrons in the best environment or even at all. In another article by McClure, Bertot, and Beachboard (1996) they discuss that even though federal policy and support for public libraries to connect to the Internet is evolving slowly that this may not be the worst problem. According to the authors, (McClure, Bertot, & Beachboard, 1996), support and discussion of the topic is not as abundant as it was and this could hurt public libraries more than lack of a clearly defined plan for public libraries provided by the government.

Lago (1993) points out that "the computer network that exists today was born of research and development paid for with tax dollars. The technological backbone of the Internet was built using federal funds." (p. 66). Lago (1993) feels that since federal funds have paid for the development for the Internet, federal funds must, at least, help pay to provide universal access to the Internet, which means funding public libraries. While many articles reiterate Lago's point that the federal government needs to provide more than supportive rhetoric, they do not agree that the American Library Association (ALA) and librarians are not committed enough to the cause and have to work harder to acquire the necessary government support.

The other obstacle, which is related to the lack of government support, is funding Internet services in public libraries. Public libraries have always been faced with the limitations of their budgets as costs continue to increase and constantly try to get as much for their money as possible. The literature related to the burden of costs for providing

Internet services is not very clear. In many general articles the cost of these services is mentioned but there are not many full-length articles devoted to the burden of costs. Most articles that mention costs are describing how an individual library paid high costs and what they did to meet those costs. Some of the most frequent solutions that these articles discuss, which libraries have successfully used to meet these high costs, are different grants that libraries were awarded and donations from corporate sponsors, local businesses, and fund-raising events in the community.

The costs of adding Internet services is a large burden for public libraries and many do not add Internet services because they can not afford to. According to St. Lifer (1997), many public libraries still receive most of their funding from local sources and are beholden to their local tax base, economy, and politicians for support. In addition to this, St. Lifer (1997) states that the Library Construction and Services Act (LCSA) is a common target for drastic cuts. Of course, hardware and software are not the only costs that the library has to cover, but also, maintenance, communication services, and training. So many public libraries have to go to outside funding sources to fund a project to offer Internet services.

Within the literature there is a lot of discussion about how much more difficult it is for rural public libraries to get connected to the Internet. Nelson (1998) states that for rural libraries "costs associated with networking are the greatest deterrent to providing Internet service. Unlike larger communities, rural areas face unique, often very problematic situations when deciding on an Internet Service Provider (ISP)." (p. 11). Nelson (1998) also points out that for rural libraries access can only be achieved by long distance calls. McClure, Bertot, and Zweizig (1997) echo this sentiment in their report

stating that the crucial factors still affecting public library Internet involvement include communications costs, followed by systems costs.

The largest part of the literature on this subject is composed of descriptions of how a public library was able to provide Internet access to their patrons. Some of these articles are just a few paragraphs and some are many pages documenting every step the library went through to offer Internet services. Fox (1995) describes how the Rockford Public Library offered Internet access after they received a LCSA grant and decided to join in a community effort to create a community online information system. Fox (1995) not only gives a brief history of the area, but also, tells exactly what the Rockford Public Library did as part of a non-for profit organization that was created to support the community online information system and even includes recommendations to other libraries. While, in her article, Commings (1996) gives four brief descriptions of Internet access projects at four different public libraries in different states, which mostly consists of quotes from the librarians that worked on the projects.

The typical article is similar to the articles written by Akeroyd (1996) and Isley (1997) who do not go into great detail but touch on all the major aspects of providing Internet service such as; services offered, description of purpose, state/federal support, funding, technical structure, and schedule of implementation. Very few articles touch upon the future of the project or describe any sort of evaluation schedule. Generally, the focus is on how to get Internet services up and running and provide the necessary network to support it. The literature may lack in depth coverage because public librarians have little time to work on these projects, let alone, write comprehensive articles about their projects.

On the surface, there seems to be a plethora of literature on this subject, but while some articles are very helpful and offer other public libraries good advice and ideas to consider when deciding whether to offer Internet services to their patrons, many do not provide much information at all. The one major limitation is that each public library has its own limitations and unique characteristics. Some public libraries have been able to offer a wide range of Internet services because they are part of a state-wide initiative while other public libraries have had all there hardware donated and have had fund-raisers to afford to pay for one dial-up connection. The articles that discuss the more theoretical and administrative points are the most helpful because they can be applied to different situations and locations.

## **Methodology**

The purpose of this study is to observe the steps the Durham Public Library took so that the Library can offer Internet services to its patrons and understand how this example can help other public libraries trying to offer similar services. Internet services is defined as having a public workstation that patrons are able to use to connect to the Internet, send email, and download files from the Internet.

This is a case study. The case study method was chosen because it would be the best means to get a detailed first hand description of the what was done to achieve the Library's goal of offering public Internet access to their patrons. The format of the case study allows the participants to discuss at length and in their own words what happened and why it happened. The case study method also provided access to any documentation that the Library produced in its efforts to launch Internet services. This researcher used and studied those materials to the benefit of this paper. This method of research is not rigidly structured which means that instead of studying the Library's Internet project as if it were in a vacuum, this allows the research to be studied in the context of the Library with the knowledge and insightful comments of the librarians.

The head of Collection Development at the Durham Public Library was contacted to discuss whether the Library was involved in any sort of project and if that could be a possible site for the study. A meeting was planned to discuss these topics and to get a better idea of how far along the project was at the Durham Public Library and who was involved. At this meeting the interest of the librarians was discussed, which included the



Technology Coordinator and the Technology Librarian. It was decided that the librarians were interested in the study and that the Library was an excellent site for this research. A letter was written to the Director of the Durham Public Library in order to request permission to use the Library as the site of the study. Once permission was established, a list of questions was compiled. These questions were to become the basis of the interviews with the three librarians that were willing to participate.

Interviews were chosen as the method of data collection because the most complete and descriptive information could be obtained from the librarians that were most involved in the project. The questions are open-ended and were developed to insure that all the necessary topics are discussed and that the librarians would have a chance to elaborate on any aspects of the project they wanted to and to help engage the librarians in in-depth and complete interviews. The major topics the questions cover are development of the project, budget issues, committees/task forces that were created, training, new tasks that had to be completed, and changes in the Library because of this project. These interview questions helped the librarians discuss the most important aspects under investigation, which were what was done to offer Internet services, how it was accomplished, and why it was done.

This study is important because it will provide other public libraries with a detailed description of one public library's Internet project. Other libraries will be able to see both the large and small issues that are involved with this type of project and how librarians handled them. This study can help other public libraries and librarians anticipate the varied obstacles and prepare the necessary resources involved with offering public Internet access.

## **Results**

The Durham Public Library, established in 1897, is the first free, tax supported library in North Carolina. The Durham Public Library consists of the Main Library, seven branch libraries, a bookmobile, and the Older Adult and Shut-in Service (OASIS) which offer information, materials, and services to the citizens of Durham County. The collection consists of over 400,000 books, which does not include the Library's audio-visual and periodical collections. The Main Library, located in downtown Durham, serves as the central location for the Durham County Library System. The Main Library was the site of the interviews conducted with the Head of Collection Development, the Technology Coordinator, who is a unit head in the Resources and Technology Services Division, and the Technology Librarian, to discuss Durham Public Library's Internet project.

In the early fall of 1996, the Director of the Durham Public Library approached the Technology Coordinator and a representative from Ameritech, the vendor that provided the Library with their automated systems, to discuss the future of the Library. The Director knew that the county was putting together a computer network in order to provide county employees Internet access and the ability to access services and information on their desktop from this new county network. Taking the cue from the county, the Director decided that the Library should develop a network that would allow the library staff to have more desktop resources, email, Internet access, and offer Internet

access to the patrons. Ameritech was asked to draw up a sketch of what the Library would need to do in order to accomplish this goal.

Ameritech developed a proposal for the Library that detailed what the Library would need to do in order to support Internet services, and a network that would be compatible with the county system. This included the purchase and installation of cabling, hubs, routers, hardware, software, and furniture. The Technology Coordinator developed a budget proposal to be submitted to the county for inclusion in the 1997-1998 fiscal year. The county decided that this could not be incorporated into the regular operating budget, that it would have to be passed as part of the Capital Projects Budget. This meant the Library would have to wait longer than expected to find out if the money for the project would be approved. The approval came in October of 1997, which was more than one year since the Director had initiated the first discussion about a possible project.

The Library decided to proceed with the project now that the funding was in place. The Technology Coordinator began to purchase the computers that would become the public Internet workstations. The standards for personal computers set by the State and County Information Technology department became the standard for the computers that the Library purchased. Though using these standards meant that the computers would be more expensive, the Library felt that this would insure complete compatibility with the county's systems and standards and the Library would not have to replace them as frequently if they had purchased computers with less memory and speed. The Technology Coordinator also used the County IT standards when purchasing the software for the computers.

At this time the Library realized that they needed to allow the entire staff to become comfortable with using the Internet and that they would need some kind of in-service training, so the staff would be able to help the patrons when the project was begun. While the Library did provide email accounts and a few terminals with dial-up access for the staff to familiarize themselves with the Internet; the Director and Technology Coordinator felt that this was not enough. The decision was made by the Director of the Library and the Technology Coordinator to hire another librarian for the position of Technology Librarian. The Technology Librarian was hired in November 1997 and was responsible for training the library staff at the Main Library and the branch libraries on basic computer skills, email, and the Internet. The Technology Librarian developed core competencies for the staff, identified key staff that needed training, and developed training materials. The Technology Librarian was also responsible for developing the Library's web site, developing an Internet use policy, and training the public once the project was in place.

While the Library was proceeding with purchasing the computers, hiring the Technology Librarian, and implementing a training program, they began to research the E-Rate program. This federal program allows public libraries to receive a discount on the fees and costs involved with establishing Internet connections. Unfortunately the Library found the policy to be very confusing and the rules seemed to change frequently, so it took the Library some time to determine if they would be eligible to receive the discount. They realized that they were not eligible because the program's policy states that a public library could not have entered into any negotiations or contracts for an Internet project before they applied for the discount. So the Library decided to go ahead and install the

appropriate cabling, routers, and all other wiring needed at the Main Library and all the branches. Since they were not going to be able to work with the E-Rate program, which would have provided a reduced rate when contracting with the vendor, they felt they might as well keep the project moving along and complete as much as possible without involving their vendor, Ameritech.

The cabling was being installed, the computers and software were purchased, and the furniture for the new workstations was being ordered when the E-Rate program changed the rules of inclusion for public libraries. The Durham Public Library was now eligible to submit a proposal to the E-Rate program under the new rules. The problem was that it was the beginning of April 1998 and the deadline for submitting the proposal was April 15, 1998. The Technology Coordinator had to write up the proposal quickly. It was successful. In February 1999 the Durham Public Library was notified that they were approved to receive the discount for their ISP, routers, and cabling.

After the E-Rate proposal was submitted in April 1998, the Technology Coordinator began to develop the specifications for the network that the vendor would build and implement for the Library and the County Attorney had to approve the specifications before they were sent out to the vendors. The Technology Coordinator wrote a bid proposal, which included specifications for a new Central Processing Unit (CPU), a new server, firewall protection, Local Area Network (LAN) equipment including hubs and terminal servers, and the requisite software. In June 1998 Ameritech submitted a proposal to the Durham Public Library and the Technology Coordinator. Although they were the only vendor to submit a proposal, the Library was ready to accept Ameritech's proposal, especially since Ameritech products supported other Library

services. The Technology Coordinator felt that they had established a good relationship with this vendor and that working with Ameritech would help insure the success of the project but, the County Attorney did not approve. Ameritech was the only vendor that came back to the Library with a proposal and the County Attorney felt that for a large project, that would cost a large sum of money, they needed to look at proposals from other vendors to be sure that the Library would secure a contract on the best possible terms.

The Technology Coordinator met with the County IT department and the County Attorney to develop a new bid. Unlike the first bid proposal, it was much more general and basically discussed the hardware and software specifications and did not discuss the details of the Library or the project. This time when the bid was sent out, more responses came from different vendors. Ameritech was chosen in the end because they would be able to install the new network and they could insure compatibility with the existing hardware and software the Library used at the most competitive price. This was approved in November 1998.

While the Technology Coordinator was working on the bids, in June 1998, the Durham Public Library decided to set up a pilot Internet project at three of their branch libraries, Parkwood, Braggtown, and McDougal Terrace. The project was developed so that the Library could better prepare for when the Internet project was put into place throughout the whole library system. These branch libraries offered free dial-up Internet access to the public. Each library had at least one workstation and from the first day the project was up and running the service has been highly used by patrons. They felt that by monitoring the project the Library could get an idea of what type of information the

public was searching for on the Internet and find out how many patrons were computer savvy. Then, the Technology Librarian would be able to develop better training sessions and workshops, the staff would be better prepared to help the public and services could be developed that the patrons would be most interested in using.

The negotiations between Ameritech and the County Attorney on behalf of the Durham Public Library, lasted from November 1998 until February 1999. It took time for both parties to come to an agreement on the wording of the contract so that both parties felt that their respective organization was protected. The Durham Public Library is aiming for a May date for the installation of all 26 workstations and feels that if the Internet server is in place with firewall protection, the public should have Internet access at that time. At first, the public will only be able to search the Internet and check web email accounts, they will not be able to download files, however, the Library expects that they will eventually offer that service to the public.

In discussions with Ameritech, the Technology Coordinator is looking for them to install and support the hubs, the PCs, locking hardware, software including security and anti-virus, Digital Service Unit/Channel Service Unit (DSU/CSU), frame relay network, and the ISP. The Library will use NetConnect, an Ameritech product for web site development, email management, and domain name service which provides a database system that will translate an Internet Protocol (IP) address into a domain name. The Technology Coordinator is currently working with Ameritech on the implementation schedule.

At this point, most of the library staff is trained and an Internet policy had been adopted by the Durham Public Library. The Technology Librarian is developing public

training programs to be held at the different branches, which will include sessions for the Internet beginner, advanced Internet searching, and specialized subject searching on the Internet. The Technology Librarian has also written job descriptions for volunteer Internet guides, who will be trained to help the public use the Internet. The Technology Librarian is also in the process of creating brochures that explain the policies to the public, and creating webliographies for different subjects. The Durham Public Library is at the final stage of their Internet project and looking forward to May when each library will be able to offer Internet access to their patrons.



## **Conclusions**

By observing the Internet Project at the Durham Public Library, it is possible to draw valuable conclusions that can help other public libraries contemplating or currently involved in Internet projects. The experiences the Durham Public Library had when developing and eventually implementing their project are not unique. Many public libraries either have gone through or will go through similar experiences in efforts to offer free Internet services to their patrons.

The first lesson to be learned is the amount of time that a large project such as this one will take to come to fruition. It is unlikely that such a project will be completed quickly. A project, like this, has many pieces that need to come together. There are forces outside of the library that need to be consulted, project research that needs to be completed, and logistics need to be figured out so that the project can be implemented successfully. In general, there is a lot of preparation that needs to be done in order to have the project run as smoothly as possible. On the flip side, the library or the librarian in charge should not let any part of the project linger or procrastinate. For this will only mean that the project will be delayed further, which may cause a loss of momentum, ending in a less than fully successful project outcome.

Keeping the enthusiasm high is very important because when a new project is first developing there is excitement and a certain buzz because of its newness and the project will help the library offer more products and/or services but this can eventually dwindle. Once the project is underway and there are delays and complications, the excitement

wanes and the enthusiasm turns into frustration. This means that completing the tasks that need to be done become more of a burden than a pleasure and the same amount of effort and energy will not be used to accomplish the intended goals. The responsibility of keeping momentum and excitement high is that of the project manager, even if one person is responsible for the whole project. It is important to infuse enthusiasm about the project among the rest of the staff so they are excited and will be happy to do what they can to help the project succeed. Along with this all the librarians and staff should understand the goals of the project and how their work will be affected, lessened, or changed. It should also be explained how this project is congruent with the mission statement of the library and helps the library attain its goals.

In the case of the Durham Public Library, it seemed that the sooner the funding was secured the project could be undertaken with confidence and could easily proceed forward. They wrote a proposal for the extra funding for the coming fiscal year's budget. For other libraries they may be writing grant applications and proposals or raising funds from corporations or other organizations. This type of work takes much time and effort to coordinate, accomplish, and to finally be approved. It seems that getting the funding for the project is the first hurdle that arises. For some public libraries they are going to have to be creative in order to fund an Internet project and for other public libraries they just have to write up a proposal to be included in their budget. Either way writing proposals for funding takes time and needs to be given meticulous attention in order to guarantee funding.

Whether one librarian or a team of librarians are responsible for writing the proposal or grant application, logistical research needs to be done in advance. In order to

have a well-constructed proposal the details of the project need to be described fully and the scope of the project needs to be clearly defined. In the case of the Durham Public Library, they asked their vendor to help them map out everything that the Library would need to buy and do in order to accomplish the goals of the project. Before any writing is begun, the project needs to be totally developed and defined in detail. In order for a librarian to write a solid proposal worthy of funding, she needs to be able to understand everything that needs to be purchased and any work that needs to be done; and the only way that this can accomplished is to conduct research in those areas.

Using the example of the Durham Public Library, the Library needed much more than computers and an ISP to offer the public free Internet services. They had to develop a computer network from scratch. All the branch libraries and the Main Library had to have some kind of cabling and wiring done, furniture, a server, software, hardware had to be purchased, and there were other services and products that required funding. It proved very helpful that the Durham Public Library researched the topic and asked for help from their vendor in order to develop a very detailed picture of the Internet project and the funding required to make the project a success. Since they were able to present a solid proposal with all the funding accounted for in detail, this added credibility to the project.

No matter how great the project is or the benefits that it will offer the patrons or community, the proposal needs to be well supported. Essentially the library or librarian is asking for money from people who are not necessarily familiar with the library and community. While library personnel know their library and users the best and it might seem obvious to them why the funding is necessary, the library board, county, or other organization does not and they need to be provided with a clear, precise, well researched

proposal. The library or librarian should illustrate how important it is to the mission of the library and that the project can meet the growing needs of their patrons.

One thing that seemed to impede the progress of the Durham Public Library's Internet project was that they did not clearly identify some outside forces that were needed to play an important role in the development and implementation of their project. In this case, a lot of time was lost because the Technology Coordinator was unaware of all the restrictions imposed by the County when negotiating contracts and did not know to contact the County Attorney when she began discussions with the Library's vendor, Ameritech. When she wrote up the original proposal she believed that the Library would be able to deal exclusively with Ameritech. According to the County Attorney, that was not the case. Since the Internet project proposed was such a large-scale project and was going to require a great deal of funding, the County required the Library to follow certain guidelines. If the Technology Librarian knew this beforehand, it could have saved a lot of time and work.

Since it is closely tied with local government and relies primarily on local funding, it is very important for a public library to find out what practices must be followed and who outside of the library needs to be involved to have the project proceed efficiently. This could be a difficult process, especially if this is the first project the library has proposed. According to this case study, it is this authors opinion that the best way to begin research is by calling, networking, and contacting offices in the County or City where the library is located to find out what kind of guidelines the library must follow. The librarian should start with the County or City offices that the library is affiliated with in order to find out what the regulations are and who in the County or City

the library needs to collaborate with to insure the success of the project. This will save everyone involved time, effort, and energy.

Finally, the most important lesson to be learned from this case study is that any library or librarian working on a project needs to be prepared for any problems that arise. They need to be flexible, have patience, and keep their enthusiasm high. The librarian in charge or the project team needs to be ready to make changes and handle any problems or difficulties head on and not become discouraged by temporary obstacles or setbacks. An example from this study is the E-Rate proposal. It was very difficult to know whether or not the Library was eligible, and when they found out only two weeks before the application deadline the Technology Coordinator was able to quickly write a proposal that would eventually lead to the Library getting the E-Rate funding. If the Technology Coordinator did not rise to the challenge and have the resources to write the proposal, the Library would have lost the opportunity to receive the needed discount rates and funding. The ability to be flexible and to be prepared to handle anything that may arise during the course of the project is essential in order to have the project proceed and eventually be a success.

This case study explicitly showed the importance of the resources of the Technology Coordinator, Technology Librarian, and everyone in the Library who worked on the project to the success of such a venture. The Technology Coordinator did not become discouraged and continued to persevere when difficulties and challenges arose. Without this perseverance and confidence, it would be impossible to implement the best project and have it become another excellent service that is provided by the Library.

In the end, this case study was not conducted in order to help other public libraries determine what software or hardware to purchase or how much money is required because those things will continually change over time and vary depending on the library and its location. The purpose was to illustrate the other more important issues that a public library has to deal with when pursuing an Internet project; the types of issues and responsibilities that are not found in the typical journal article. Pursuing an Internet project in a public library can be an exciting and challenging goal, but it is important for the library to understand the resources it will need and the work that will need to be done in order for the Internet project to succeed.

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